



Bringing Resources to Nevada's Adult Education Community

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Study shows disparity between what educators know and what they say they know about teaching reading

Excerpted by Elizabeth Crum, trainer & reading tutor, (ecrum@mgci.com, 702/324-3176), from "What Adult Educators Know Compared With What They Say They Know About Providing Research-Based Reading Instruction," Bell, Zigler, and McCallum, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, pp. 542-563, April 2004.

Because of an increased emphasis on improving adult reading skills, educators are being challenged to provide more effective reading instruction for diverse groups with widely varying goals, skill levels, and learning difficulties. This is creating an increased need for research addressing the level of knowledge and preparation adult basic education teachers have or need to provide optimal instruction. Studies conducted to determine the most effective instructional practices for reading generally focus on the following key areas:

- 📖 Alphabetics (phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis)
- 📖 Fluency (the ability to read with speed, ease, and accuracy)
- 📖 Vocabulary (understanding the meanings of words)
- 📖 Reading comprehension (deriving or constructing meaning from a text)

A 2000 National Reading Panel report underscored the importance of teacher preparation in these areas. The report found there is often a mismatch between what teachers know and apply to the classroom and what research has shown to be the most effective techniques for reading instruction. There is also a frequent disparity between what teachers know and their perceptions of what they know. Unfortunately, these types of findings are often not adequately communicated to teachers, and therefore educators' knowledge of evidence-based reading instruction methods remains limited.

A 2003 study of 208 southeastern educators, the Knowledge of Teaching Adults Reading Skills (KTARS), assessed teachers' impressions of their knowledge of reading instruction terminology and practices. Results indicated most teachers surveyed were not able to accurately predict their own levels of mastery. That is, the participants' self-report of specific knowledge rarely corresponded to their mastery of that specific content.

Ideally, education researchers say, there should be a positive relationship between cognition and meta-cognition, that is, knowledge and *knowing about* one's knowledge. However, the KTARS study showed that teachers who knew more about teaching reading skills to adults tended to be more conservative in their estimate of their own content mastery. Conversely, the scores of educators who said they knew the most about teaching adult reading skills showed they actually did not.

Adult educators surveyed demonstrated knowledge of roughly half the assessed content. However, there was very little or no correlation between educators' knowledge and self-ratings of specific content.

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See page 4 for upcoming Nevada workshops on "Teaching Beginning Readers."



Eleven more adult educators prove performance

Eleven instructors and tutors from three Nevada programs submitted evidence of student outcomes and were awarded their ABE Certificates of Performance this past fall. These educators met the student retention and performance criteria outlined in the state's unique outcome-based recognition program.

★ Sheila M. Fairbairn, Ioan Ciprian Sas (C. A. L. L.)

★ David Moore (Northern Nevada Literacy Council)

★ Bradley Archer, Josephine Berton, Nancy M. Butler, Levia Campanaro, Jan Conner, Jeanette Johnson, Herbert W. McLucas, Katherine L. Pack (Truckee Meadows Community College)

For more information, contact Sharyn Yanoshak, 702/253-6280, saylv@cox.net or visit

<http://www.literacynet.org/nvabecp/>.

Listening in on listservs

If you haven't subscribed to Nevada's listservs, you missed out on a lively, informative discussion around "adolescentizing the GED." Using an article from the Spring 2004 issue of *Adult Basic Education* as a springboard, participants addressed the issue of allowing 16 to 17 year-olds to take the test. The discussion touched on policy and cultural implications, as well as on adult education theory and methodologies.

There are three listservs: NVGED, NVESOL, and NVADULTED. For more information or to subscribe, email saylv@cox.net specifying the name of the listserv and your connection to adult basic education in Nevada.

National College Transition Network launched

NCTN's goal is "to support ABE staff, programs and states in establishing and strengthening ABE-to-college transition services through technical assistance, professional development, collegial sharing, advocacy and increased visibility for this critical sector of the adult basic education system." A quick check of this burgeoning Web site (www.collegetransition.org) shows thorough, well organized content, with concise and clear explanations. The link "From GED to College: Transition Activities for ABLE Teachers and Students" is especially pragmatic and useful.

Reading *(continued from page 1)*

In the direct assessment of teachers' knowledge, researchers found sampled educators knew slightly less than half the assessed content. Those educators who teach only beginning literacy skills earned significantly lower scores than those who teach multiple grade levels. Data also showed a surprisingly low level of knowledge about vocabulary and comprehension strategies.

According to the study's authors, professional development staffs need to be aware that practitioners may not be able to accurately estimate their level of knowledge about a particular content area, and therefore assessment strategies should not rely solely on self-report. Since the degree and level of teacher training, knowledge, and experience is positively associated with student achievement, many reading educators can benefit from professional training.

A recent NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) study tested reading ability and looked at brain images of formerly poor readers as they learned to read. "The images show that effective reading instruction not only improves reading ability, but actually changes the brain's functioning so that it can perform reading tasks more efficiently," said NICHD Director Duane Alexander.

The results show that "teaching matters, and good teaching can change the brain in a way that has the potential to benefit struggling readers," added study coauthor Sally Shaywitz of Yale University.

Special Leadership Funds Available for Online Staff Development

Special funds are available to pay the registration fee for approved online/Web-based courses applicable to educating adults. Adult education practitioners who work in an established Nevada program for adults without a high school diploma are eligible to apply.

How it works

- For courses taken through www.ableacademy.org, we will pay the registration fee directly; for other courses, you will be reimbursed for the registration fee after you complete the course.
- You will be asked to complete a short evaluation of the online learning process so other Nevadans may learn from your experience.
- With evidence of successful completion, facilitated courses may count toward renewal credits for the Adult Basic Educator's Certificate of Performance.

To apply:

Send (via email):

- ✓ Your name, phone number, and program for which you work
- ✓ Course title, number, description, expected start/end dates, and cost
- ✓ Web site address for course

To: Sharyn Yanoshak (saylv@cox.net)

You will receive a response
(typically within a week) via email.



Questions?

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Upcoming free workshops

These workshops are available at no cost to all adult education teachers and tutors in Nevada on a space-available space. Contact the host to reserve your spot!

Title/date/place	Host (contact)	Presenter and objectives
Current Brain Research and Its Teaching Applications 01/15/05 Carson City	Teri Zutter WNCC 775/445-4451 tzutter@wncc.nevada.edu	Joan Cook. Develop an understanding of how recent brain-based research can be utilized to design teaching strategies that enhance learning. Explore active methodologies that encourage the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies. Share specific, practical, useable, active learning strategies that enhance learning for ABE, ESL, and other adult learner experiences.
Tried and True Tips for Terrific Teachers 02/05/05 Reno	Brad Deeds TMCC 775/829-9052 bdeeds@tmcc.edu	Val Brady. Revitalize all experienced instructors with a toolkit of fresh, useful teaching tips and techniques. Provide for and promote a lively exchange of tips and teaching techniques among instructors. Encourage experimentation, exploration, and implementation of new activities and strategies in the classroom.

Teaching Beginning Readers, presented by Amy Trawick, reading instruction expert and manager of EFF Reading Project One workshop — offered on four different days!

Las Vegas: Fri., 1/14/05	Connie Barker, C.A.L.L., 702/507-3534, barkerm@lvccld.org	Reflect upon the knowledge, skills, and strategies skilled readers use to read with understanding. Identify developmental benchmarks for beginning readers and implications for the teacher/tutor. Explore hands-on, research-based instructional approaches that support beginning readers in developing useable knowledge in alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
Las Vegas: Sat., 1/15/05	Nita Russell-Latham, Catholic Charities of So. NV, 702/693-6761, jlatham@catholiccharities.com	
Winnemucca: Fri., 2/18/05	Meachell LaSalle, Great Basin College, 775/753-2109, meachell@gbcnv.edu	
Carson City: Sat., 2/19/05	Teri Zutter, WNCC, 775/445-4451, tzutter@wncc.nevada.edu	